

Employers Beware

About 500 on-line diploma mills currently offer fake credentials from locations around the world, including degrees from colleges with names deceptively similar to reputable schools.

As a result, it is increasingly difficult to determine if a degree or transcript is legitimate. To verify whether or not a job applicant has earned the credentials he or she included in an employment application, contact the National Clearinghouse, one source for post-secondary degree verification at www.degreeverify.com. The clearinghouse will verify a degree for a nominal fee.



Additional Resources

More information is available from several sources, including:

- **The Oregon Office of Degree Authorization:**
The state of Oregon hosts a comprehensive Web site for identification of unaccredited institutions and degree mills.
www.osac.state.or.us/oda/
- **The Council on Higher Education Accreditation:**
CHEA Fact Sheet #6 includes a series of questions that will help determine if an institution is legitimate.
www.chea.org/Research/CHEA%20Fact%20Sheet%206%20Diploma%20Mills.pdf
- **Degree Info.com**
This commercial Web site provides information about distance learning programs.
www.degreeinfo.com/
- **Unconventional University Diplomas from Online Vendors or Fraud, Corruption and Scandal: Buying a PhD:**
A PowerPoint presentation by Dr. George Gollin, a University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign physics professor, provides examples of how diploma mills operate.
www.hep.uiuc.edu/home/g-gollin/diploma_mills.pdf
- **Additional Research by Dr. George Gollin on unaccredited institutions**
http://www.osac.state.or.us/oda/index_OR.html
- **North Dakota University System**
701.328.2960
www.ndus.nodak.edu

Is This a Real Degree?

How to Avoid a Bogus Degree from a Diploma Mill



NORTH DAKOTA
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

The Vital Link to a Brighter Future



If a College Degree Seems Too Good to Be True, It Probably Is.

Some diploma mills offer certificates and degrees for a small purchase price or based solely upon experience or a review of one's resume. Others offer degrees after a short enrollment period, completion of a few assignments or little, if any, attendance. And some are mere printing press operations that will print any kind of credential for a fee.

With the worldwide reach of the Internet and the availability of low-cost, high-quality printing technology, the digital diploma mill industry is growing by leaps and bounds. Diploma mills use deceptive tactics, such as approval by bogus accrediting agencies, to appear legitimate. A student who obtains a degree from a diploma mill institution receives neither an education nor a useable credential and may be guilty of a criminal offense.

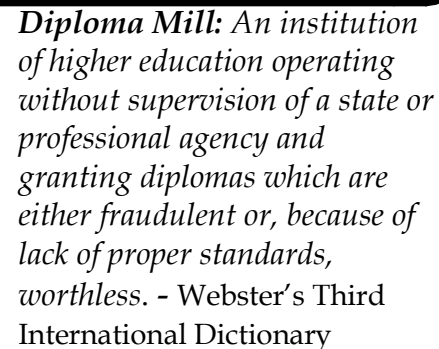
If you are a prospective student, you can learn how to avoid fraudulent degrees. If you are an employer, you can learn how to spot them.

It's the Law

Effective Aug. 1, 2003, North Dakota law protects citizens from degree inflation and credential fraud by people who use credentials from diploma mills.

According to Chapter 15-20.4 of the North Dakota Century Code, it is illegal to use a false credential for employment, higher education admission or in connection with a business or profession. Doing so carries a Class A misdemeanor penalty; a one-year imprisonment and/or a fine of \$2,000 may be imposed.

It also is illegal to issue or manufacture false credentials. This may result in a Class C felony penalty; a five-year imprisonment and/or a \$25,000 fine may be imposed. An organization convicted of an offense also may be required to give notice of the conviction to those harmed. To view the applicable law, go to:
www.state.nd.us/lr/cencode/T15C204.pdf and
www.state.nd.us/lr/cencode/T121C32.pdf



Diploma Mill: *An institution of higher education operating without supervision of a state or professional agency and granting diplomas which are either fraudulent or, because of lack of proper standards, worthless. - Webster's Third International Dictionary*

Get the Facts

In North Dakota, only credentials from legitimate institutions of higher education are acceptable for use in employment.

Legitimate institutions are those that are accredited by organizations recognized by the U.S. secretary of education or otherwise approved by the North Dakota State Board for Career and Technical Education.

Two sources will help you determine whether a degree or credential is legitimate for use in North Dakota:

- **The Office of Postsecondary Education** provides a list of accreditors recognized by the U.S. secretary of education:
www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg4.html
- **The State Board for Career and Technical Education** authorizes in-state post-secondary institutions to operate in North Dakota:
www.state.nd.us/cte/post-secondary/programs/priv-post-inst

To verify the legitimacy of institutions that do not operate in North Dakota, contact higher education officials in the state where the institution is located or call the Department of Career and Technical Education (CTE) at 701.328.2678. It is important to understand that licensure in another state does not guarantee acceptance of a certificate or degree in North Dakota.

Degrees offered by some international institutions meet North Dakota's standards of academic quality and are accepted in the state. For information about a specific international institution, call CTE at the phone number listed above.